

# Winter Walking



Don't let the weather stop you from walking and rolling to school this winter—keeping active during the colder months is a great way to stay healthy, happy, and attentive year-round!

Here are some tips for keeping your school's Safe Routes momentum humming through the winter.

## Keep Warm & Dry

Most heat loss occurs from heads, hands, and feet, so students and parents should equip themselves with insulated hats, gloves, and socks. Also, students may want to consider packing a dry pair of socks to change into at school.

Wear a warm coat that deflects the wind, and footwear that is waterproof and provides good traction on slick surfaces like ice and snow. Students may also choose to wear a scarf over their face and mouth on really cold days.

## Be Visible

Winter means fewer hours of daylight and increased rain and snow, so it is critical that students are visible in low light. Wear light and bright colored clothing or use small blinking lights or reflective tape, vests, and zipper pulls to increase visibility (these can be purchased at most bike shops).

## Follow Traffic Rules

Use sidewalks where available. If there is no sidewalk, walk on the shoulder facing oncoming traffic in a single-file line, and stay as far to the edge of the roadway as possible to buffer yourself from traffic. Watch and listen for approaching vehicles, and be vigilant about ice and snow that can create hazards.

Identify commonly used routes to school and ask your public works department to ensure sidewalks and shoulders are plowed and maintained.

## Monitor the Weather

Even Vermonters have limits! Be aware of oncoming storms or extreme temperatures that may make walking dangerous—generally, it is recommended to suspend activities at -13°F (-25°C). If you are in charge of a walking school bus, contact the other families in advance if you need to cancel the walk to school. Brrrr!!!

## Promote Winter Walking!

Keeping the momentum can be tough in the winter, so extra incentives may help. Give stickers or small prizes to students. Hang posters, make announcements, and host programs that keep your students motivated. Need to reward top winter walkers? Paint or decorate an old boot and award the "Golden Snow Boot" to the classroom that walks the most winter miles!

This tip sheet was adapted from the National Center for Safe Routes to School and Canada Walks' *Winter Walk Day* ([www.saferoutestoschool.ca/winter-walk-day](http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/winter-walk-day)). You can also learn more at [www.saferoutesvt.org](http://www.saferoutesvt.org).